

An uneasy silence fell on the crowd as they shifted and eyed each other.

Ellis, the next door neighbor said, "You mean Juanita."

Clete belched and said, "Right, Juanita."

The men vanished like the cats had earlier, and the cats emerged from their hiding places, slinking toward the bowl, stopping on their journey to silently sniff the air.

RUTH LEAHY'S SORE BOTTOM

Ruth was hand watering some dry spots on the front lawn when Ranger, the pit bull from up the street, kept by his owners for protection for their hundred thousand dollar indoor marijuana garden, wandered by and decided to attack. He slunk around silently behind her and clamped his powerful jaws deep into the abundant flesh of her left buttock, then lurched backwards, dragging his howling prey across the yard.

Ellis was inside admiring the set of used golf clubs and their cracked vinyl bag that he'd bought at the Disabled American Veterans' Thrift Store. He looked out the screen door when he heard his wife's screams and saw her being dragged backwards across the lawn by the pit bull belonging to the druggies up the street. So he grabbed a rusty five iron and dashed outside, and then he dashed the dull, evil, inbred brain of the pit bull all over the driveway.

Ruth had to lie out flat on her stomach on the bed of Ellis' pick-up truck for the ride to the hospital. She got ninety-five stitches and a referral to a good plastic surgeon.

When they arrived home, Ranger was still in their driveway with his crushed skull, curled into a fetal position and stiffened like a ninety-pound rock by rigor mortis. Ruth slid oh so slowly and carefully out of the truck's bed and picked him up, cradled in her arms like a large, ugly baby. She limped up the sidewalk, trailing blood and brain tissue from one end of her load and stinking brown lava from the other, with her husband Ellis tripping back and forth behind her, trying to talk her out of doing anything foolish.

When they arrived at the house with the unkept lawn and the torn screen door, Ellis had given up on trying to get his wife to drop the dog and come back home. He ran

ahead of her and opened the screen door, and Ruth stood on the porch steps, lifted Ranger over her head, and screamed, "HERE'S YOUR GODDAM DOG, YOU LOWLIFE SHITHEADS."

And she threw him, with all her might, through the open door, where he bounced off the wall, knocking a hole in the plaster board, and into the family room, where he demolished a monstrous and nearly completed beer can pyramid that his owners had been constructing for the last four days.

A LAPSE IN JUANITA'S DIET

Juanita was on a diluted fruit juice diet, trying to shed a few pounds for the upcoming bikini season. She was sitting on the sofa with a grumbling stomach, watching T.V. and changing channels with the remote control every time a food commercial hit the screen, when the doorbell rang: it was the delivery guy with a hot pizza for her husband Clete.

She ripped the box from the man's hands and drove her face into the steaming pie, tearing off huge chunks of it with her teeth, then shaking her head from side to side like a dog with a rat. Four bites and the pizza was gone. Then she started in on the box.

Back at the pizza place the shop's owner, Mohammed, asked Ramon where the money was from his last delivery. Ramon told him: "A grizzly bear got the pizza, man. A grizzly bear in a muu muu. I didn't ask for no fuckin' money."

Clete stepped in from the garage. He could smell pizza but there wasn't any evidence of one in the house. Juanita was watching the shopping channel on the cable, a big watery glass of grape juice on the end table by her side. She belched softly. Clete gave her a suspicious look. She giggled and said, "Excuse me."

EYE CONTACT

When Ruth and Ellis heard that Big Time Tony and the Tourniquets were playing the Acapulco Club again, they got themselves gussied up and headed on down, checked their coats with the hat check girl, and moved across the dance floor toward a stage-side table, Ruth's tumbleweed-sized bouffant wig brushing a waiter's tray and nearly tipping it over.